

Senate Natural Resources, Oceans, & Recreation Committee
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Sen. Jacobsen: Thanks for coming. I really appreciate it. You've inspired me on this tree.

Dave Thysell: You bet Mr. Chairman. I am an interested and concerned individual who has studied the Garry Oak in Washington and published some scientific and some other material about the current condition and ecological importance of Garry Oak communities. In a previous year's testimony before this committee in support of this bill I provided a copy of my historical poem "Beneath the Garry Oak" for this record and I will do so at the close of my testimony. There's little doubt in the scientific community that Garry Oak is both a legacy of recent glaciation in the Puget Sound area and a part of the anthropogenic ecosystem where fire has long been used to maintain the openness of the Oak woodlands by eliminating encroaching conifers. It is also true that Garry Oak habitats are of critical importance for our native Western Grey Squirrel, a rare species whose population on Fort Lewis is now being augmented by trapping these animals in other parts of Washington for release on the fort. Numerous other uncommon species are associated with Garry Oak woodlands throughout its range. Historical range of Garry Oak extends northward to British Columbia where less than five percent of the pre-settlement Garry Oak remains, through much of lowland western Washington, along the Columbia, and east of the Washington Cascades in a few localities through Oregon's Willamette Valley and into California. In B.C. Garry Oak ecosystems are recognized as one of Canada's richest and most endangered ecosystems. Throughout its range loss of Garry Oak ecosystem due to habitat conversion, habitat, alien species introductions, and fire suppression is well-documented. With non-profit organizations dedicated to Garry Oak community restoration existing in British Columbia and in Oregon. In Washington State the ecological importance of Garry Oak communities is clearly demonstrated by the efforts of many federal and state agencies and by the efforts of conservation groups including the Nature Conservancy and the Washington Native Plants Society. All of their efforts have cited the ecological value and uniqueness of Garry Oak habitats, the threats to these habitats that have reduced their current area to a small percentage of their former extent, and the need for more restoration efforts and active management of remaining Garry Oak communities. Many of us who are students and devotees of the Garry Oak communities believe that the earlier and much larger area of oak dominated woodland and savannahs such as we see here and associated prairies were the result active and intentional use of fire by our Native American predecessors. They also believe that the future of Garry Oak communities in Washington depends on an even more active and intentional effort to educate our fellow Washington citizen about this component of our Washington landscape. All of us are—of course—aware that the State of Washington is experiencing a terrible fiscal crisis. But while we also recognize that our great State has had and will have—continue to have times surplus and times of scarcity. But such times of shortfall and surfeit—as they will surely come and go—are all parts of our Washington beautiful environment, must constantly be protected to the best of our abilities. It is vitally important that we step back and realize that we have an obligation to identify and draw attention to issues that are distinct from and transcend the year to year necessities of economics and of governing. I believe that Senate Bill 5105 does just this by communicating the importance of educating our citizens about the unique and ancient Garry Oak

communities in Washington. I'm going to close with just a very short verse from one of the poems I've written and—

*The oaks have stood the test of time. So not so long ago,
Canopies that for centuries held wonders will, we may never know.
If just one ancient oak could talk, what would it have to say?
Or should instead we question who would listen here today?
The oaks would surely ask us who would listen here today.*

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. If there are questions...

Sen. Jacobsen: I have a question, I understand there's three varieties *Quercus garryana garryana*, *Quercus garryana breweri* and *Quercus garryana semota* and we have *garryana* up this way as a species.

Dave Thysell: We do, I believe as you go across, if you go down into the Naches River we have these sort of dwarf oak, that may be another variety, and the others exist much farther to the south all the way into the mountains up around L.A.

Sen. Jacobsen: Okay I'm cheating and looking up Wikipedia right now, I understand the only known foodplant for one type of caterpillar is the Garry Oak. Looks like *Bucculatrix zophopasta*?

Dave Thysell: You got me there Senator.

Sen. Jacobsen: What kind of research did you do in Fort Lewis?

Dave Thysell: I was looking primarily at the effects of long-term fire suppression and the encroachment of the Douglas Fir that had the effect of diminishing the existing oaks by overtopping them. They're not at all shade tolerant and the years of fire suppression have had quite a negative effect on the Garry Oak growth and recoument from seedlings.

Sen. Jacobsen: Are there any other questions? Ok, thank you. I really appreciate it. If you'd submit your poem I need to refresh my mind on it.